

Internship Report skate-aid

Hanna Störmer

University of Groningen, Campus Fryslân

Global Responsibility & Leadership

Alexandre Belloir

January 16th, 2024



Outline

1.	Introduction	3
2.	The Internship Organization	4
3.	The Internship Itself	7
3.1.	skateaid@school	
3.2.	GirlsSkate!	
3.3.	Skating Instead of Ritalin	
3.4.	Skate-Aid Night	
3.5.	Other	
4.	Evaluation	11
4.1.	Learning Goals	
4.2.	Acquired Competencies	
4.3.	Contribution to the Internship Organization	
4.4.	Usefulness of Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Degree Programme	
4.5.	Future Career	
5.	References	16

Introduction

“ We empower kids! Our tool - the pedagogical power of skateboarding ” - skate-aid

- (skate-aid, n.d.)

This paper provides a report on my internship at skate-aid, which took place in Münster, Germany, from September 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023., involving more than 560 working hours and translating to 20 ECTs. As mentioned in the preface, I chose this internship with the intention of bridging the gap in my practical experience and realizing my dream of combining social work with skateboarding. Exactly this was made possible by being an intern at skate-aid, an international non-profit organization dedicated to professionally promoting the educational power of skateboarding through the conduction of skateboarding workshops and the construction of skateparks to empower kids all around the world.

In the following, I will first provide an in-depth description of skate-aid itself before moving on to elaborating on my main tasks as an intern, which included conducting skateboard workshops as part of different projects, such as “skate-aid@school” and “skating instead of ritalin”, organizing and leading the “GirlsSkate! tour”, and participating in planning, managing and executing skate-aid’s annual charity and fundraising gala, known as the “skate-aid night”. This is followed by an evaluation of my internship, which includes a reflection on my initial learning goals, a look at competencies that I have acquired, an elaboration on my contribution to skate-aid, a reflection on the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired in the my degree programme, and a final look at how the internship has impacted my future career.

The Internship Organization

Skate-aid is a highly recognised German non-profit organization based in Münster, which is dedicated to professionally promoting the educational power of skateboarding around the world through the conduction of skateboarding workshops and the construction of skateparks in order to empower children and thus promote the well-being of youth across borders. (skate-aid, n.d.)

In Münster, where my internship took place, not only the main office is located, but also skate-aid's shop, where skateboard equipment, clothing and accessories donated by various companies are sold non-profit. The revenues from this shop are used for the organization's charitable projects.

Skate-aid's work has two main pillars: their national projects on the one hand and their international projects on the other. Their national work consists of running a number of pedagogical skate workshops in Germany with the aim of promoting self-determination, integration, unity, and inclusion. Their main projects in Germany are the following: Firstly, "Skatepark in a box". This project entails setting up containers filled with mobile skate obstacles and skate equipment (skateboards and safety gear), hence the name skatepark in a box. Furthermore, at the container's location skateboard workshops are offered. The containers are located in social hotspots or areas where a lot of different nationalities live together in the same neighborhood, to offer the children a safe space and foster community. (skate-aid, n.d.)

Secondly, there is "skating instead of ritalin", which is a series of skateboarding workshops specifically for children diagnosed with ADHD. This project runs in collaboration with the Institute of Sports Science at the University of Münster and researches the impact of skateboarding on the well-being of children diagnosed with ADHD, and depending on the



results, whether skateboarding workshops can become an option for adhd treatment. As the research is not yet complete, no definitive response can be given as of now; however, the data gathered thus far indicates that participation in such workshops has a positive impact on children's ability to concentrate, balance, and tolerate and therefore improves the children's symptoms. (skate-aid, n.d.)

Another domestic project is "skate-aid@school", a program where skate workshops are held in various schools (primary schools, schools for children with special needs or secondary schools), using mobile obstacles, a mobile mini ramp (which is a mini ramp built in a trailer), and skateboard equipment (safety gear and skateboards). (skate-aid, n.d.)

The fourth main project in Germany is "GirlsSkate!". This is an initiative where a team of mainly female skate-aid coaches yearly goes on tour through Germany to give free skateboarding workshops at different youth facilities especially for girls to counteract gender stereotypes and encourage girls to pursue their interests and develop their skills. This project aims to foster female empowerment, female confidence and gender equality. (skate-aid, n.d.)

The international work of skate-aid entails the construction and maintenance of skate parks all over the world, especially in countries where children are disadvantaged and lack perspective due to difficult circumstances such as war, conflict or poverty. These projects are always carried out in partnership with the local community, with the goal of eventually having the local community manage the projects themselves. Skate-aid currently has 25 projects in 18 different countries across four continents, and therefore contributes significantly to child and youth welfare, socialization, prevention, and peace work. Below you find an overview of skate-aid's projects. (skate-aid, n.d.)

Figure 1

Project Overview



Skateboards and safety gear are provided free of charge in all of the projects mentioned above, making them accessible to everyone. With the skateboard workshops and especially the skate parks, skate-aid provides safe spaces for children and young people to socialize and develop freely, regardless of their age, origin, religious beliefs, skin color, social class or gender. These projects aim to promote qualities that skateboarding reflects such as intrinsic motivation and self-determination, confidence, creativity, and excitement, encouraging children and young people to develop into strong individuals who then again are able to enrich their community. (skate-aid, n.d.)

The Internship Itself

Having described the organization, in the following section I will describe my main tasks during my time at skate-aid. Overall, I am happy to say that I was given the opportunity to get an insight into and take part in almost every aspect of skate-aid's activities.

skate-aid@school

Especially in my first month at skate-aid, my main task was to be a skate coach in this project, which entails a series of workshops given at different schools in the Münster area. Usually, we were a coach team of three people, driving early in the morning from our headquarters in Münster in a van packed with workshop equipment such as safety gear, skateboards, and mobile obstacles. To one of the schools, we also brought our mobile mini ramp. Mostly we drove to the same schools for at least three and up to five days in a row. There, as part of their school curriculum, different classes would consecutively participate in our workshop. I was mostly working with children in primary schools, ages eight to ten, but I also worked with children in secondary schools, where the participants' age ranged from ten to thirteen years.

The goal of these workshops (and skate-aid's workshop philosophy in general) is to provide an alternative to the externally determined learning that is usual in German schools, and instead of that give room for self-determined learning guided by intrinsic motivation and self-determination. This is also why it is intentionally called a skateboarding workshop and not a lesson. As a coach, my role was therefore not to act as a teacher but to meet the kids at eye level and give them space to try things out for themselves without any external pressure. Of course, me and my colleagues were always there, if someone wanted us to show them something or if any other questions arose but rather as someone who can give them support and guidance while they were free to try out things according to their own pace and will.



GirlsSkate!

If I were to pick a highlight during my internship, this surely would be it. For this project in October, I was on tour for 10 days through Saxony, a federal state in eastern Germany, together with two other female coaches, giving skateboarding workshops for girls in difficult situations at different youth facilities. Our first stop was in Leipzig, followed by Chemnitz and Dresden. Our last stop took us back to Leipzig before we returned to Münster. Not only was I, together with the other intern at skate-aid, entrusted with the full responsibility for carrying out this tour, but also for planning it. Thus, work on this project already began weeks prior with contacting potential facilities, determining the route and timeplan, booking accommodations, as well as packing the van with mobile obstacles, skateboards, and safety gear, but also with catering and equipment for ourselves. At each stop, we visited a youth facility for several consecutive days where we held skateboarding workshops in cooperation with the facility staff. All these facilities have something in common: they offer kids in difficult situations a safe space to just be themselves and also to develop. Our skateboarding workshops for girls complemented this important work. Up to 30 girls (and depending on capacity also boys) between 6 and 16 years could participate.

Skating Instead of Ritalin

Throughout my internship, I worked as a skate coach in this program on a weekly basis, every Tuesday afternoon. Together with two other coaches we gave skateboarding workshops to two successive groups of children diagnosed with ADHD, 1 ½ hours per group. The same concept that underlies every workshop at skate-aid, as described in the previous section) was also present in these workshops: The goal is to avoid externally motivated learning and to enable intrinsically motivated learning, to show the kids what is possible, to stimulate enthusiasm in skateboarding, to engage with them and answer questions, but never



to apply pressure. The workshop aims to give the children a sense of achievement and empowerment.

Skate-Aid Night

"Skate-aid night" refers to the organization's biggest annual fundraising gala. Every year in November, this important and large event with approximately 300 attendees, including German celebrities, takes place in Münster, involving catering and live music, as well as an extensive stage program including updates on skate-aid's work. The goal is to generate money to continue and further expand skate-aid's projects.

This year, I was a part of the team that planned, organized, and executed this event. The weeks prior to the gala were characterized by an immense workload for everyone in the team. My tasks in this context ranged from organizing the prizes for the raffle at the skate-aid night, to sorting and preparing goodie bags for every guest, preparing the event venue (such as setting up the tables and ensuring the bar is well-stocked), assisting in the organization, and completing many ad hoc tasks as they arose. On the day of the skate-aid night, I was responsible for the shuttle service of VIPs, as well as assisting in event coordination. Furthermore, I was interviewed on stage about what it is like working as a skate coach at skate-aid and what the workshops look like. The next day, I was again in charge of the shuttle service for VIPs, and the following days, my task was to coordinate the delivery of the prizes that were won at the gala's hall auction.

Other

Next to my main tasks described in the previous section, I had additional smaller tasks throughout the internship. In general, there were a lot of little tasks that came up during a typical workday, such as running errands, cleaning the shop, sorting the warehouse as well as picking up things from there, filling up the customer's fridge, writing emails, helping with



paperwork, sending items that customers bought online, etc. I also occasionally assisted in running the shop, especially when there was the monthly flea market from skate-aid, one day in the month where there are special deals for everything offered in the shop. Moreover, I once assisted the founder of skate-aid at one of his readings at a hotel near Münster.

Additionally, I was interviewed for the annual skate-aid magazine and I was the main contact person for the manager of the international projects wherever I could be of help, which consisted mainly of packing packages of donated skate equipment gathered in Germany and sending it to the international projects. This also included writing out the donation invoices, which had to be thorough since they are the foundation for the parcel passing through customs and the donations reaching the projects. Lastly, in December I worked many shifts at the Christmas market where skate-aid had a stall, selling products from the shop.

Evaluation

Learning Goals

Prior to the start of my internship I formulated the following learning outcomes in the approval form submitted to and approved by the board of examiners:

- Enhanced communication skills
- Improved professional and practical behavior/knowledge
- Specific skills in the area of social work connected to skateboarding
- Advanced skills in management and team work
- Project organization, coordination and completion
- Increased Knowledge Upon the Inner Workings and Administrative Structures of an International NGO

Overall, I can say that this internship not only made me reach the intended goals, but all the experiences also made me grow a lot as a person. In the following paragraphs I am briefly going to elaborate on each learning goal.

Communication Skills

Cooperating and engaging with so many different people, from my coworkers in the office and at the workshops, to the participating children, their parents, to the people in charge of the schools or youth facilities I've visited, as well as communicating with all of the companies and guests involved in the skate-aid night, allowed me to make significant progress in my communication skills. Not only did I learn how to communicate professionally in a work environment, be it in person, through making calls, or via writing emails, but I also learned how to adapt my communication style based on the stakeholder - supervisors, colleagues, guests, parents or children.



Professional and Practical Behavior/Knowledge

Being an integral part of the skate-aid team for the last months and participating in all of the aforementioned activities, undoubtedly helped me greatly advance my practical and professional knowledge. The practical experience of conducting workshops, carrying out the GirlsSkate! tour, being involved in the skate-aid night, and engaging in office work, gave me a valuable understanding of how to act in a professional setting and how practical work in a non-profit organization can look like.

Specific Skills in the Area of Social Work Connected to Skateboarding

Especially since it was my first time working with children, this internship taught me how to communicate and engage with children in a work setting and how to be someone the children respect while allowing and offering a personal connection so the children can feel safe. In particular, the work during the GirlsSkate! tour was very intense on an emotional level since I got to meet and become close to many children with a difficult background. Never before was I that much confronted with my own privilege of how I grew up. I got to meet many kids with tragic life stories and seeing these innocent children, who had no fault in their situation, was at first very challenging for me to process. I gradually developed the ability to empathize with the kids while maintaining a professional distance to avoid my emotions getting in the way of my work.

Furthermore, I developed the skill on how to conduct skateboarding workshops and I learned how to convey the difficulty of skateboarding techniques in a child-friendly manner, so the children were able to easily comprehend what they needed to do in order to learn something.



Management and Teamwork

Particularly being in charge of the planning and completion of the GirlsSkate! tour made me improve my management skills considerably, as it required me to manage many different tasks for the tour to be a success, such as finding partner institutions, setting the route, arranging accommodation, scheduling workshop times, packing equipment, and managing the time right. As this was my responsibility together with the second intern, it furthermore required good teamwork between the two of us. But not only in this project, basically every task during my internship required me to interact well in a team and collaborate and communicate effectively, be it with the main team in the office, with my colleagues at the workshops, or when organizing the skate-aid night.

Project Organization, Coordination, and Completion

As described above, being closely involved in projects such as skate-aid@school, skating instead of ritalin, the GirlsSkate! tour and the skate-aid night gave me extensive insight on how projects are designed, organized, coordinated and completed. Therefore my skills in this area have advanced accordingly and I feel more self-confident about myself acting in and contributing to projects in a work environment.

Knowledge Upon the Inner Workings and Administrative Structures of an International NGO

Overall, I can say with certainty that my knowledge of the inner workings and administrative processes of an international NGO has grown as a result of experiencing all the different facets of skate-aid's work firsthand. There is no doubt that these past months made me achieve my initial intent of bridging the gap between theory and practice and provided me with experience in how practical work with a degree in our program can look like. I have acquired an advanced understanding of what the practical work of an NGO can



look like, and which dynamics, processes, responsibilities, tasks and difficulties comprise its everyday operations.

Acquired Competencies

This internship has made me further advance in many competencies. Due to the limited scope of this report, I am going to simply list the main competencies this internship made me advance in:

- Adaptability
- Resilience and discipline
- Motivation and Commitment
- Ability to self-reflect
- Diligence and sense of responsibility
- Empathy
- Sociability and openness
- Initiative
- Ability to make judgements and decision

Contribution to the Internship Organization

Based on the feedback I got from my colleagues, I can derive that my main contribution to skate-aid is two fold: Firstly, I became a valuable team member and support during the last months due to the high-quality performance I demonstrated during all of my tasks. My dedication to the tasks at hand and my reliability in finishing everything assigned to me to their total satisfaction were much appreciated by my colleagues. My supervisor further said that he could tell I had the sensitivity, comprehension, and understanding that is needed for this kind of work, particularly in reference to the work with the children.

Secondly, I contributed to skate-aid with my social skills, as I was able to establish good connections with all of the team members, which made me integrate well into the team and become a valued addition. I got the feedback that my colleagues very much enjoyed working with me, as I enabled a comfortable working atmosphere.



Usefulness of Knowledge and Skills Acquired in the Degree Programme

While none of the GRL courses served as a direct foundation for this internship, my academic background equipped me with the necessary knowledge and abilities to deliver high-quality work and make the absolute most of my internship experience. Throughout my internship, I was often reminded of how much my studies had taught me to be compassionate, sensitive to various points of view, and to always look at the bigger picture in any given situation. Knowing that the organization plays an important part in achieving several SDGs, such as SDG 3, 5, and 10 further helped me see the importance of the work that skate-aid does in a larger context. I also noticed how the multi- and interdisciplinary study fostered my ability to adapt to changing topics and tasks quickly and to be interested in all kinds of aspects at hand. All of this helped me greatly when working at skate-aid.

Future Career

This internship helped me to put my studies into perspective and gave me an understanding of what my future career can look like. It certainly reinforced my interest in social work and my intention to work in this field in the future. Furthermore, this internship allowed me to connect to many people active in the field of social work and skateboarding, which is beneficial for my future career. Most likely I will continue to support skate-aid in the following months, for example by taking part in another GirlsSkate! tour. Once I complete my bachelor, skate-aid would be happy to have me as a permanent team member.

References

skate-aid. (n.d.). *You want to help kids? We empower kids!* | *skate-aid e.V.* Skate-aid.

Retrieved January 2, 2024, from <https://www.skate-aid.org/en/>

skate-aid. (n.d.). *skate-aid Magazine* | *skate-aid e.V.* Skate-aid. Retrieved January 14, 2024,

from <https://www.skate-aid.org/en/about/magazine/>